

TO THOSE WHO FEEL UNFIT FOR THE COMMUNION

NO. 2131

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD. For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.”
2 Chronicles 30:17-20

BRETHREN, *it should be much to our joy that we do not serve under the ceremonial law, nor live within the legal dispensation.* The legal economy exhibited to the people a multitude of types and figures, and consequently it laid down many rules and rituals, and these were enacted with such solemn and terrible penalties that the people were in constant fear of offending, and found obedience irksome by reason of the weakness of their flesh and the unspirituality of their minds. As for our Lord Jesus, His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. But concerning the law, even Peter speaks of it as “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.”

We are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, a liberty which those who had been in the bondage could best appreciate. Those who are still under legal restrictions feel the pressure of them when they see the liberty of others. Sitting at dinner with a Samaritan, who considered himself under the law of the Pentateuch, I noticed that the worthy man refused first one dish and then another, and at length he exclaimed, “*Moses very hard*,” evidently feeling that the limit upon his diet involved a good deal of self-denial.

Some of us could cheerfully bear such small matters as abstinence from certain meats and drinks, but if we were surrounded with regulations and prescriptions entering into minute details, our life would be full of cares and we should feel ill at ease.

We have attained the liberty of the Gospel, and we are not called upon to observe days, and months, and years, nor to border our garments with a certain color, nor to trim our hair by rule, neither are we called to practice divers washings and purifyings, or to observe laws and regulations amounting to a continual round of rites. The “free Spirit” dwells in us, to us every place is hallowed, our religion is not of the outward, and in the matter of meats we call nothing common or unclean. We have ordinances, it is true, but they are few and simple. They are but two and each of them is instructive and easy. Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, which are for the Lord’s people only, are easy of observance, and are for our help and comfort, but are by no means burdensome.

These are not laid upon us as yokes, but given to us as privileges. Neither are they enforced by such a sentence as this, “The soul that forbearth to keep the passover shall be cut off from among his people.” Gospel ordinances are choice enjoyments, enjoined upon us by the loving rule of Him whom we call Master and Lord. We accept them with joy and delight. In keeping these commandments there is great reward, but they are not presented to us as matters of servitude.

In Baptism we are made to see the burial of our Lord, and are helped to enter into spiritual fellowship with Him therein, this is no burdensome ordinance, but a delight. The Lord’s own Supper is a

joyful festival, a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined. All is joy and rest about these two ordinances. In enjoying them we feel that we are not under law, but under grace. I would not have you come to this table with the same trembling with which an Israelite ate the passover, or stand there as the Israelite did, with your loins girt, and your staff in your hand, eating in haste and apprehension. Nay, but you may sit at ease, or even recline, to express the rest which you enjoy at the Lord's table, and the close communion to which your Redeemer invites you. He has called you His friends, and He has honored you to be His table companions, to sit and feast with Him without reserve.

Lest liberty should degenerate into license, I am bound to remind you that *we are not left without command and direction*. The law of love is as binding on us as ever the law of works could have been. We are still called to obedience—the obedience of faith. A most strict but most happy service grows out of sonship, and no true son wishes to disown it. Should not the son honor his father? Does not the Lord Himself say, “If I be a father, where is mine honor?”

There is a service of which we read, that God spares such a one, “as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” We are not under the law, but yet we are not without law to Christ, and concerning these ordinances which I have described as the privilege of the Lord's free men, there is an order of the Lord's house, and a discipline of His family, which must by no means be set aside by the loving child. We are not slaves fearing the lash, but we are sons who have a filial fear of grieving our heavenly Father.

The rules concerning the passover, and the right keeping of that high festival were plain and definite, and to break them would have been a great offense to the God of Israel. These rules required a certain ceremonial cleanness on the part of all who partook of the Paschal lamb, and those who were defiled were kept back, so that they could not present the offering of the Lord in its appointed season. The sacred rite was not to be celebrated in heedless formalism, but with a careful cleansing out of the old leaven, that they might keep the feast aright.

Now, concerning the memorial Supper of the Lord, we have no rubric as to the bread or the wine, and no prescribed regulation as to posture or manner of procedure, and yet there are certain notes of guidance which we shall do well to follow with loving care.

For instance, when we come to this table of the Lord, it should not be without a preparedness of heart for it—“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup.” To come here irreverently, or with sinister motive, is to secure condemnation. To come here idly and carelessly is to lose the blessing. We should approach the table with hearts full of humility, gratitude, faith and expectation. We should receive the bread and wine with sincere longing after fellowship with Christ, tender love to His blessed person and great joy in His finished work. If we do not thus partake of the sacred feast we shall miss its high design.

Yet, nevertheless, since I fear that there may be a certain number here tonight of the Lord's own people, who are in the condition of the multitude in Hezekiah's day, out of Manasseh and Zebulun, who have not sufficiently cleansed themselves after the manner of the purification of the sanctuary, I am anxious to show them how they may, even now, come to the divine ordinance, and realize profit from it, through the abundance of divine grace.

God helping them, from this moment they may commence the necessary preparedness of heart, and may speedily attain to it. So long as they do sincerely wish to meet with God, and to enjoy fellowship with Him in His ordinance, there is no reason why they should retire from the assembly of the saints. They may begin, even now, I say, to make ready for this festival, and by divine grace they may so partake of this supper, as to find in it all that their hearts desire.

Our Lord is able, by His Spirit, to wash away their present defilement, and quicken them in mind and soul, so that they may both draw near to God with true heart, and discern the Lord's body with clear understanding. Such is the power of divine grace, that in a few moments the Lord can take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously. Our Great High Priest, in the sacred authority of His divine office,

can confer perfect cleansing, and give us full right to sit with the family, and partake of the lamb, and to rest beneath the roof, whose door has been marked for safety by the sprinkled blood.

I. So I will begin by saying, first, that as in the case before us in the text, so at this very time, **THERE ARE SEASONS WHEN WE FEEL UNFIT FOR THE SACRED ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S HOUSE.**

It may be, that at this hour, there are many in the congregation who are not sanctified for the feast, and are not cleansed according to the due order. I speak not of you all, there are choice spirits in this place, who “walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have fellowship with God perpetually, so that the blood of Jesus cleanses them from all sin. Why should we not all seek this acceptable preparedness, so that we may never be unfit for the most hallowed of all engagements?

Ought we ever to be unfit for our Lord's table? Those two disciples who walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, talked together by the way. What a mercy it was that when their Lord asked them the manner of their communications they could give this for their short answer, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth”! Could you answer in such commendable style when you talk together?

Consider, my brethren, and answer to your consciences. It is well to be in such a condition that in our common talk we are still keeping near to Jesus of Nazareth. The transition from our private dialogue to our Lord's actual company, and even to His being made known unto us in the breaking of bread, should be just like the gliding of a stream from one part of its channel to another, as it hastens its constant flow towards the boundless sea.

I fear that many of us have to complain of ourselves at times that we feel unfit for any holy thing, and most of all for the solemn engagements of this hallowed ordinance. Let us think of the ways in which the Israelites were rendered unfit for the passover and see how far they tally with our unfitness for the Supper.

Some were kept away by defilement. Read in Numbers, ninth chapter, sixth verse—“And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day.” For these men it was provided that they should keep the passover a month later, but they were to keep it without fail. Read the ninth and tenth verses—“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD.”

I am afraid that you and I touch a great many dead bodies, and are often defiled thereby. You cannot go out to your business tomorrow morning but you will meet with that spiritual death which loads with corruption the air of “this present evil world.” The dead in sin lie all around us, contact with their ways and motives, unless we are continually cleansed by divine grace, is defiling in many ways.

Worse still, we cannot even stay at home without finding sin in our own dwellings. Yea, the mass of sin within your own selves, “the body of this death,” as Paul calls it, is a constant source of defilement. Some quickness of temper, or levity of language, or excess of care, or thought of pride, or desire of covetousness, will occur. Oh, that we were delivered from the liability! These dead and corrupt things lie, not only in a corner, but on the table, in the bed, and everywhere, and when we touch them we are defiled. Whatever kind of sin it may be, whether of act, or of word, or of thought, or of imagination, or desire, it defiles more than most men imagine.

Oh, that those who prate about perfection knew their own uncleanness! It were for their humbling, if they knew the sadly all-pervading influence of evil. How shall we pass through this huge charnel house of a world, so full of everything that is corrupt, without becoming daily defiled? There are sins even in our holy things. Who shall deliver us?

A sense of defilement sadly tends to hinder fellowship. I know that if you are laboring tonight under a sense of sin, you do not feel the joyful liberty you would desire in coming to the hallowed table of your divine Lord. You long to have that sense of defilement sweetly removed by the application of the precious blood which cleanses from all sin. Thank God, that sacred purification is always available. You

can at once wash and be clean, and know yourself to be “accepted in the Beloved.” Thus may you eat the passover even “as it is written,” but in any case, even if burdened with sin, the Lord does not forbid you to remember the death of His dear Son. Like the men of Ephraim, you shall find pardon, every one.

Peradventure, however, you are not conscious of having fallen into any known sin, but yet you feel like one who is not at home with God, but at some measure of a distance from Him. You are out of your usual walk and rest. That calm and holy frame, that perfect peace which once you enjoyed from hour to hour, has gone from you. Thus you have about you, spiritually, the second disqualification for the passover.

When a man *was on a journey afar off* he could not keep the passover. The passover was a household institution. It required a house wherein the lamb could be slain and prepared for eating, and a door whereof the lintel and two side posts could be sprinkled with blood, so that, when a man was moving rapidly from place to place, and had no house where to sojourn, he could not observe the holy festival. Even thus, when you and I are out of our usual abode in Christ Jesus, and are wandering in anxiety, care, and doubt, we do not feel able to commune with our Lord as our hearts would desire.

Brethren, do we not sometimes flit to and fro, like Noah’s dove, finding no rest? How hard, then, is it to get into the full teaching of this holy Supper! It is well to sing, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee,” but till the prayer is answered, the ordinance is not enjoyed. The heart’s blood of the Eucharist is nearness to God, and when we are afar off, it is a poor, dead ceremony. Its crown and joy is rest, and if we are tossed to and fro like the locust, and are like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, what use can we make of the mere form of the feast? Then are we very sadly disqualified for the sweets of communion, and feel disposed to go home and leave the holy feast to others. Yet such going home would be painful, and might even be injurious.

O Lord, what shall Your servants do? We feel like men on a battlefield, and this ordinance is as green pastures, wherein the sheep feed, and lie down, while the shepherd comes among them, manifesting himself to them. Gracious Lord, quiet the inward warfare, and make us to lie down, as says the Psalmist, “He maketh me to lie down,” for if You do not thus give us rest, we shall trample down even these holy pastures, and grieve Your Spirit.

Beloved friends, some of you have come here tonight weary with the greatness of the way. You have been on a journey all this week, and you came to a halt on Saturday night afar off from that spirit of devotion which you should cultivate. Life of late has been full of troubles and perplexities. I pray the Lord to give you sweet rest at this moment, and bring you nigh to Himself. “Cast your care on him; for he careth for you.” Lay your burdens down at the foot of the great burden-bearer’s cross. Be quiet even as a weaned child. At the same time, cry unto the Well-Beloved, “Draw me, we will run after thee,” and before you are aware, your soul shall make you “like the chariots of Amminadab.” If you cannot come to the Beloved, He can come to you, “leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills,” and all your distance and disquiet will cease at once, so shall you keep the feast.

It may so happen, that up to this moment you have been in an evil case, *from unknown causes*. You cannot say how or why, but certainly it is not with you as in days past. Marring influences not mentioned in the book of Numbers, and possibly not mentionable at all—but none the less real for all that—may have been keeping you from eating the spiritual passover to your heart’s content, and may now tend to keep you from a truly happy approach to the Lord’s table in spirit and in truth.

Whatever the cause may be, I want you to confess it frankly, just as those men in Numbers confessed to Moses that they had touched a dead body. So far as you know the cause of defilement and division, own it. Look at the mischief as best you can, and mourn over it as far as it is sinful. Then carefully put it away from you, so far as it is a matter of care or distrust, and labor earnestly at this moment to prepare your heart to seek the Lord your God, even though you cannot quite feel that you are cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, I mean, even though you do not feel in the best possible frame of mind for holy fellowship.

Some *supposed disqualifications* may be removed by an act of faith, or by a fuller knowledge. Do you fear to come because you have such little faith? May not the little children have their supper as well as the grown up sons? Are not these precisely the members of the family who most need to be fed and comforted? The utter absence of faith would shut you out, but not the feebleness of it. Come, you little one, to you I say, "Come in, thou blessed of the LORD, wherefore standest thou without?"

Do you hesitate because your joy is not now overflowing? Is this a sufficient reason for refusing to obey the command, "This do in remembrance of me"? Were the twelve full of joy at the founding of this feast? Had they no questions, saying, "Lord, is it I?" May not the feast itself furnish the joy? Is not the Lord of the feast your exceeding joy? If you cannot bring joy with you, come, that you may find it here.

Do you say, I am spiritually weak in all points? Again I ask, is that a reason why you should not feed on the best of food? It seems to me that it is a chief reason why you should feed often and heartily. "Eat ye that which is good" is a safe prescription for you, and a generous invitation from your Lord. Greatly you need it, freely take it. The supply of heavenly bread is intended for those who are faint. "He hath filled the hungry with good things." He will fill you.

Do you complain that you feel so useless? This is a deplorable fact, but what has it to do with the matter in hand? Are you to come to your Lord's table because you are useful to Him? Nay, but that the Lord Jesus may be useful to you. Surely this is not a wage, but a provision of free grace. You do not bring the feast, your part is to receive it. So only can you become useful to Christ as Christ is abundantly useful to you. You cannot help to feed the multitude till your Lord first puts the bread into your hands. Come now and take what He has blessed.

I know, that for many reasons, the choicest saints at times deem themselves disqualified for this holy banquet, and I have sometimes thought that that is not altogether an ill feeling, at any rate, it is a symptom of many healthy things. If I felt myself worthy in any sense, except the Scriptural one, I should infer from my self-satisfaction that I was unworthy. This table is no place for Pharisees. Where the Savior presides, there may come none but sinners saved by His grace. If you have merits of your own which you can boast, and no sin to confess, you are not the man for whose salvation the Substitute has shed His precious blood! How could He atone for those who have no fault?

But if you are a sinner, you are the sort of person whom Jesus came to save. Jesus is the sinner's friend. He will be yours if you go to Him in that capacity. How can we commemorate the shedding of His blood unless we daily feel that we have solemn need to be washed therein? How can we remember Him except as we see how we derive all from Him? Jesus is never seen to be a full Christ except by those who feel their own emptiness apart from Him. He is never prized at a true value by those who have a high esteem of themselves. A broken heart knows best His power to comfort. A bleeding heart sees best His power to heal. If you are sensible of your unworthiness, you are not unworthy in the Scriptural sense, but may freely come.

For my own part, I enjoy my holiest seasons when my heart lies low before the Lord. No communion is more intensely sweet than that which washes His feet with tears and covers them with kisses of penitential love. When I have been most ashamed of myself, my Lord has been most glorious in my eyes. When I have, in shame, covered my face, He has, in love, uncovered His own countenance. Come, then, you weeping saints, for I know that you seek Jesus, and you are such as He welcomes to His table! Bring your disqualifications and turn them into confessions of sin, and these, by increasing your hunger, will enable you the better to enjoy the provisions of that sacred table where Jesus is both the host and the food, the bread and the wine, and yet the Master of the feast. Thus much upon those hindrances and disqualifications. It is not a cheering theme.

II. But now, secondly, though we feel and lament our want of preparation, WE MAY STILL COME TO THE FEAST.

Let us, to some extent, follow in the tracks of the men of Hezekiah's time.

They forgot their differences. The one nation had been rent into two, and even in Hezekiah's time there was ill feeling between Ephraim and Judah, but the king of Judah overlooked his boundaries, and

we read that the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun, and many of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Political and personal feuds were forgotten. They were one family, and they recognized the relationship, and gathered to the one table.

I trust none of us are at variance with others, but if we are, let us make peace at once. This we can do on the spot, let us put away every angry and unkind thought. From this foul stuff let all our bosoms be purged at once. The memorials of our dying Lord have slain all our enmity, and given life to our love. This will be a great help towards coming fitly to the table.

We read that when the tribes assembled *they removed the idols*. They took all the altars that were in Jerusalem, and cast them into the brook Kidron. This was a fine beginning for men who did not feel quite up to the mark.

Come, brethren, let us down our altars of creature worship, cut down the groves of carnal confidence, and break up the graven images of unholy love. If there is anything in our heart that has usurped our Lord's place, let us each one to himself sing very softly this verse—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee.”*

NOW, open your heart to Jesus, and give Him all your love. He is worthy of much more. Young man, have you any ambitions that are apart from Christ's glory? Break them as with a sledge hammer at this moment. Christian man, have you any glory apart from the cross of Jesus? At this moment crucify it. Nail your glory to His cross, and have done with it. Dear Sister, are there any loves of yours that are alien to the love of Christ? Have you any secret delight which you could not expose to His view? Any alabaster box which you would not cheerfully break for Him? Come, cast away all idols. You cannot keep the feast aright till this, at least, is done, but this accomplished, you may observe it with gladness.

How I long to hear the breaker's hammer going. Can it not be done at once? Unless those idols have been so long set up in your heart that there is a question whether you love the Lord at all, they will readily fall from their pedestals. If you love Jesus, your spirit will make your hands quick at this sacred iconoclasm, till you shall have broken down every image which now defiles the temple of your soul.

That done, those who were not all that they desired to be, yet *endeavored to prepare their hearts*. “Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers.” Do you long to seek God tonight? Then there is access for you. I can truly say for myself, that I long, above everything, to meet with my God and Savior at the table. Though I be in myself unworthy, yet I cannot live without my Lord. I must have Him, and nothing else will satisfy me short of fellowship with Him.

No outward sign, no bread, no wine, no fellowship with God's people will content me, my heart is hungering for her Savior. My Lord, my God, my heart cries after You! As the thirsty hart in the wilderness pants for the water brooks, so does my heart cry out for God, the living God. Is it so with you? Surely the best sort of preparation is already commencing in your soul. Let your heart take its full of this longing and pining, that is the way in which you will be enabled to come to the sacred table without being an intruder, and without missing the blessing.

Note, next, that Hezekiah *made open and explicit confession unto God* that these people were not as they should have been. He did not excuse them, but he came before God and cried, “The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart.” Herein is wisdom. If our hearts are longing after God, let us confess our neglect of meditation, our failure in private prayer, our forgetfulness of self-examination, and our failure in all those other preparations which are so appropriate to this blessed memorial of our Lord. Thus drawing nigh with sorrow and regret, and with the humble resolve that, in the future, your

heart shall endeavor to dwell nearer to the Lord, and further off from the defiling influences of a dead world, you will in spirit and in truth commune with Him who never yet sent a penitent from His presence without saying, "Peace be unto you."

Confession made, *let prayer ascend to heaven*, "The good Lord pardon every one of us everything in wherein we have been lax, or deficient, or erring. O You heart-searching God, forgive Your servants and accept us in Christ Jesus." Thus purified and made white by instantaneous pardon, we need not hesitate to keep the feast. With desire have we desired to feed upon our Lord, who is the true passover, and He will not refuse us. Even to Laodicea He said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," even to those who dwell in that lukewarm church He promises to sup with them, if they will but admit Him, and therefore, we are sure that He will sup with us, even with us, though we come blushing, and with shame upon our faces.

III. We come, in the last place, to notice, that IN SO COMING, WE MAY EXPECT A BLESSING.

If we do but come with a prepared heart, and great longing of soul, even though we confess ourselves to be disorderly, and have to plead with the Lord to forgive our unfitness, yet He will, without fail, meet with us and enrich us with the blessing which we seek.

God's ways of acting are the same in all ages, and if Hezekiah and his people won the blessing, and "praised the LORD day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the LORD," even we may look for the same joy and holy exultation. We read that they "kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with *great gladness*."

Beloved, I want you to enter into that great gladness tonight. If there is any place where we are bound to be glad, it is at the Lord's Supper. Remember, this is no funeral feast, it is no memorial of one who lies rotting in the grave. Here we remember that Jesus died, but we also hear those prophetic words, "Until I come." He lives, and He shall shortly come with all the glory and majesty of heaven to claim the kingdoms as His own, and to judge the nations in equity.

Therefore have we joy as we come to the table. It is a memorial of a death by which the life of myriads was purchased. It is the memorial of a great struggle which ended in the most glorious of all victories. "It is finished," is the banner which waves over us. Such a victory is a joy forever, let it be gladly commemorated.

Here we celebrate the feast of pardoning love delighting itself in being enabled justly to spare the guilty. Here is the feast of redeemed bondsmen, the jubilee of emancipation from everlasting slavery. We come hither as those that are alive from the dead to feast with Him, who, in very truth was slain, but who has risen again, and has become our life and our joy. Oh, for a well-tuned harp! Bring an instrument of ten strings and the psaltery, and let every string be awakened to ecstasy on behalf of Jesus, to set forth in worthy notes His passion and His triumph.

There was great gladness in Israel, even among the men of Ephraim who were not ceremonially fit to keep the passover, and following upon this, there was *great praise to God*. They continued singing unto the Lord all the day. The Levites and the priests and the people joined with them, and they brought forth loud instruments to add to the volume of their music. Notice the words, "singing with loud instruments unto the LORD." They employed everything by which to express their overflowing gratitude, their glowing joy.

I pray that my Lord's servants may fetch out their loud instruments tonight to sing unto Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Let us lift up the song, "Worthy is the Lamb, for thou wast slain, and have redeemed us unto God by thy blood. Thou shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Unto thy name be hallelujahs throughout eternity." Oh, for the cymbals, the high-sounding cymbals, that, with their mighty clash, we might express something of the overpowering joy of our spirit before the living God!

Brethren, these were the very people who kept the passover, "not according as it was written." They came ill-prepared, unpurified, and utterly unfit, but God blessed them, and helped them to get ready for the holy feast there and then, and I trust He will do so now to those who desire it. How much I long that

all of you Christians—half-asleep Christians, lukewarm Christians of a doubtful sort, Christians whose right to commune is gravely questioned by yourselves—I long that you may be quickened on a sudden by the Holy Ghost, who is still in the midst of the church, that you may at once delight yourselves in the Lord, and feel a holy nearness to Christ, and a heavenly exhilaration at the mention of His name. So will you eagerly praise the Beloved of your soul, and bid all that is within you bless His holy name!

Added to this, in the passover in Hezekiah's days, there was *great communion with God*, at least the outward sign of it, for "they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers." In those sacrifices other than sin offerings, a part was put on the altar for God, and a part was given to the priest and the worshipper to feast upon, that they might thus, in symbol, hold fellowship with God.

Oh, for a measure of hallowed fellowship with God at this time! Many of you know what it means. If you do not, I cannot explain it to you. You must taste and see for yourselves. May it be with us tonight as it was with the elders on the side of Sinai, of whom it is written, "They did see God, and did eat and drink." What a wonderful combination! Yet what an instructive conjunction! "They did see God, and did eat and drink." Oh that we might eat and drink with our Lord at this time as men eat with their friends! May we now see that face which no earthly eye can see! May we hear that voice which sounds not in mortal ear, but penetrates the soul! Oh, that we may see Him who is invisible! We may do so even now. I mean even you, who feel least prepared, can yet enjoy this supreme delight. Oh, that you may do so till you assure me that I have not told you the half of what you now taste and feel.

I pray the Lord that the soft south wind may blow warmly across this congregation, till all the winter is gone from your spirits, and you feel the icebergs within your souls dissolved and running away in streams of praiseful gratitude to Him who has loved you of old and now manifests Himself to you. There is a secret charm, a silent energy of the Holy Spirit, which, in quiet, He can exert over the minds of His people, and I pray that you may know it now, even you that are least prepared for the engagement which at this moment lies before us.

Then there came upon the people *a great enthusiasm*, insomuch that they resolved to have another seven days of holy convocation, just as Solomon did when they consecrated the temple. We are told that "they took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness." I love to find people so possessed with the Spirit of God that they say, "That service was by far too short. I wish it had kept on for another hour." I love to see them lingering, as if they could not quit a place in which they have been so greatly blessed. How pleasant to go away, not loathing, but longing, and watching till another Sabbath shall come, that we may hear again of the same sacred matter, and feel again the same dew from the Lord!

How we tremble lest the heavenly blessings should be withdrawn! for we feel that we can no more command them than we could bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion. Since we have been in the sacred chambers of the King, we have feared lest our golden keys should be missing, so that we could not enter into His treasury again, or again approach His seat. You know how you feel when your heart sings of the place

*"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."*

When you long for that protracted worship, it shows that God is very present with you, and it was so with the people in Hezekiah's days, who, nevertheless, were at first unprepared for the Paschal festival! May you who are now dull become so joyous that you are eager to turn a seven days' feast into fourteen, may your enthusiasm know no bounds, may you rise as on wings of eagles, and maintain your highest soaring for many a day!

Furthermore, this brought about *a great liberality*. Everybody wanted to offer sacrifices, everybody was anxious to feed his poorer brethren, the king gave a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep,

and the princes would not be outdone by him, they must needs go just a touch beyond him, for they gave a thousand bullocks and *ten* thousand sheep. Meanwhile, a host of priests came, and more fully surrendered themselves to the service of JEHOVAH their God. How I wish that some such a result would follow the present service! Oh that many of you would give largely of your substance to the cause of God, and may others give themselves more fully to the great Master's service! From this time forth, may devoted men and consecrated women be found in all our families, and may the kraals of Africa and the Zenanas of India be the better for it.

Did you observe in the reading how the people finished the festival? They had *another great breaking of idols*. The hammers gave forth their music again, and the images went to pieces. All that which was displeasing to God became displeasing to the people, and they swept it away. That was the finale, for when God goes up, the devil goes down. As sure as ever you love God, you must hate idols. You cannot rejoice in Him, and yet rejoice in the world, the flesh, and the devil.

What sacred jealousy, what holy revenge, what destruction of every evil thing within the soul, is sure to follow when the Beloved unveils His charming face, and all our soul is melted with the beams of His love! Nothing hastens sanctification like communion with God. May this table be to all of you the place of your renewed tryst with Jesus! May you again take Him by the hand, and surrender to Him, while He shall take you by the hand, and work in you all the good pleasure of His will! Let marriage vows with Jesus be repeated here. May our living union with Him become more consciously a matter of fact! May this be a sanctifying season!

May this be so even with you who were just now saying, "I do not think that I dare stop to the communion! I do not feel aright, nor desire aright. I am dead, stupid, heavy, and I fear I should only profane the sacred table." Cry to the Lord as Hezekiah did! Mingle your confessions and your prayers before the mercy seat, and may the good Lord pardon each one of you, even though you are not purged after the purification of the sanctuary as you could desire.

The Lord bless His waiting people, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
NUMBERS 9, 2 CHRONICLES 30**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—337, 814, 457

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.